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## CLASSIFICATION AND GRADATION

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The regular method of classifying pupils in grades separated by intervals of one year or a half-year each, requiring all pupils to do a certain amount of work in a given time, regardless of the wide difference of abilities is common in most school systems. But because of the fact that all children have not the same brain capacity, this system has proven to be entirely inadequate, and falls far short of adapting itself to the needs of individual pupils. While many do not wish to depart from the ironclad, lock-step system, at the same time it is agreed among school men that such a system as would establish shorter intervals between grades, so that individual pupils may be transferred from one grade to the next higher without omitting any part of the course, would eliminate the difficulty and make our graded schools more effective.

The semester plan or the division of the course into sixteen parts, as exists in most cities, shortens the intervals between grades to one half-year, but prepares a class for the high-school every half-year, which cannot always be accommodated, or, if accommodated, requires graduation twice a year. The quarterly plan which is a division of the course into thirty-two parts shortens the intervals to nine weeks. The plan of dividing classes until the intervals average about six weeks, making fifty-four classes, is ideal but requires special conditions to operate successfully. Under the two latter plans there must be one of two things—more teachers or more classes for each teacher. But these are excellent systems where buildings are especially large or so located that sixteen teachers in the former plan and twenty-four in the latter may be working upon the same set of pupils; however there are but few places where such a condition exists.

The result in any one-course system which may be devised is that the schools must be graded to suit only the bright pupils, the dull pupils, or the average pupils. Therefore any one-course system falls far short of what it should be, in that it is entirely inadequate for two of these classes or fully half the pupils attending any school. An ideal system would be a number of courses varying in length to suit all abilities, but this of course is impracticable and out of the question. The nearest approach to this would be two parallel courses, articulating with one another in such a way as to come together at different points and thus afford means of transferring back and forth to a slow or rapid rate, as may be necessary. The resultant of this would be in reality several routes or courses varying in length to fit individual cases of different capabilities.

While the eight-year course is most common, it is claimed by many that a course of study should be less than eight years. On the other hand it seems to have been necessary in a number of places to provide a preliminary grade before the first or a preparatory grade following the eighth, in either case making a nine-year course. It has been demonstrated in the short-interval systems that a large number of pupils can complete the work in six years and the conclusion reached is that they should have an opportunity to do the work in six, seven, eight, or nine years, according to their ability. A system that will allow pupils to do the work in from six to nine years, and be so systematized as to be operated with no additional teachers and as a regular graded system, is necessary, and with this end in view the following plan has been in successful operation, in the LeMars public schools the past three years, and the Odebolt public schools the past seven years.

#### THE TWO-COURSE SYSTEM OF GRADING

Two courses of study are made out covering the same identical work and differing only in the length of time it takes to do any portion of the work. These courses are outlined so as to run parallel and articulate with one another at different points along the line. Classes can be so graded by means of two

courses of study to come together at different periods, allowing pupils at these points to be transferred from one course to the other without loss of any of the work whatever. And in addition the intervals between classes are so correspondingly short as to permit transfers practically at any time. The two courses of study are a six-year course and a nine-year course. This offers the opportunity whereby a pupil may take the full course in six years; by three different routes he may make it in seven years; by three other routes in eight years; and by one route in nine years, and in none of these cases is he required to repeat any part of the course.

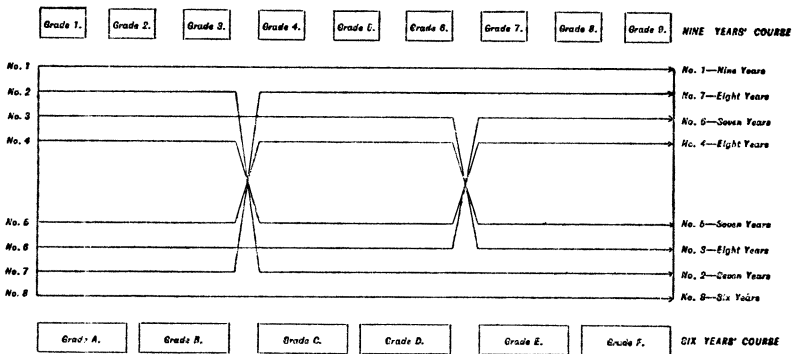


DIAGRAM OF THE TWO-COURSE SYSTEM

The results of the two courses working together is shown in the diagram. The nine-year course is represented by the grades indicated by numbers and the six-year course by the grades indicated by letters. Grades 1 and A begin the primary work together. Grades 3 and B complete this work. Grades 4 and C begin the intermediate work and 6 and D complete the same. Grades 7 and E begin together the grammar work which is completed with 9 and F.

After completing the kindergarten, pupils are divided into two divisions, according to their general ability: the one division being placed in Grade A of the fast or six-year course, and the other division in Grade 1 of the nine-year course.

All pupils do not show the same comparative ability at different ages; for a pupil may be naturally slow during the first

three years of school life, but develop much more rapidly later; in this case he may be transferred from Grade 3 to Grade C. Or, the conditions being reversed he should be transferred from Grade B to Grade 4. That is, at the close of Grade 3, pupils in the nine-year course have completed the same work as the pupils in Grade B of the six-year course and at the same time; the same holding true with pupils in Grades 6 and D, and 9 and F. Hence pupils may be transferred at these points from one course to the other without loss or repetition of any of the work whatever, and continue from that point either at a more rapid rate or at a slower rate, as may be desired.

The lines in the diagram represent the different actual courses as the resultant of the two parallel courses articulating. Course 1 is the regular nine-year course. Course 2 takes a pupil through Grades 1, 2, 3, C, D, E, and F, completing the work in seven years. Course 3 carries pupils through Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, E, and F, completing the work in eight years. Course 4 carries one through Grades 1, 2, 3, C, D, 7, 8, and 9 in eight years. Courses 5 and 6 are each seven years in length. Course 7, eight years, and Course 8 is the regular six-year course. Thus out of the two regular courses result eight courses: one six-year course, three seven-year courses, three eight-year courses, and one nine-year course.

At the end of the year we have four kinds of promotions; the "regular" promotion, which is merely promoting a pupil from one grade to the next higher grade in the same course; the "transfer" promotion, which is promoting a pupil from one grade in one course to the next higher grade in the opposite course, as from 6 to E; the "advanced transfer" promotion, which is transferring him to the next higher grade in the opposite course and somewhat beyond his present class, as from 4 to D; the "retarded transfer" promotion, which places him in the opposite course and gives him the benefit of a review before taking up advanced work, but without loss of time, as from 5 to D.

While the "regular" and "transfer" promotions are expected to occur at the end of a year, the "retarded" and "advanced"

transfers may occur at any time during the year as well as at the end of the year, for the points of division brought out in the eight courses are by no means the only opportunities for transfers. This brings up the question of short intervals between classes, and a reference to the following table as an illustration will show that the short interval feature is also an important part of the two-course system.

TABLE OF INTERVALS BETWEEN CLASSES

Between Grades	Time	Interval
4 and C.....	Beginning of year	Zero
4 and C.....	End of third month	4 weeks
4 and C.....	Middle of year	6 weeks
4 and C.....	End of sixth month	8 weeks
4 and C or 5 and C....	End of year	12 weeks
5 and D or 6 and D....	Beginning of year	12 weeks
6 and D.....	End of third month	8 weeks
6 and D.....	Middle of year	6 weeks
6 and D.....	End of sixth month	4 weeks
6 and D.....	End of year	Zero

From inspection of the above table, it is noticed that the intervals between classes increase in length until a point is reached where the intervals are twelve weeks, and from that point they begin to decrease. As a result, the intervals between any two consecutive classes throughout the whole course are never more than twelve weeks, and most of the time they are from four to eight weeks. Therefore individual pupils may be given opportunities for short reviews by "retarded transfers," or be placed to the next higher grade by "advanced transfers" any time during the year and with but little effort.

By this provision for individual promotions or transfers the system places each pupil where he properly belongs at all times. and, instead of being compelled to "mark time" waiting for slower ones in his grade, he is permitted to advance as rapidly as his ability will allow. On the other hand those who require more time are given more, and are therefore not pushed into new work until they are thoroughly prepared for it. The strongest argument in favor of this system presents itself when one notes the flexibility of the course and how easily it adapts itself to the varying powers of the child.

The teacher's careful estimate of a pupil's ability to do advanced work determines his promotion. A pupil's promotion is not determined by lapse of time nor by any fixed mark, but by acquired ability to go forward. As soon as the work of a grade becomes too hard or too easy for a pupil he is placed in a grade better suited to his abilities.

By this form of organization the grading of our schools becomes so flexible that the course of study is adapted to the needs of individual pupils. In fact, the pupil is made the center about which the course is constructed. The course is made flexible for the child, not the child made flexible for the course. At the same time system is retained, the course is definitely planned, and no additional teachers are required to do the work.

#### TWO SIGNIFICANT RESULTS OF THE TWO-COURSE SYSTEM

A school system should be administered from two standpoints; first, and by all odds most important, the standpoint of the child, and second, that of the taxpayer. In reference to the former it will be of interest to note the number of pupils pursuing the work in each course and the number of years required by different pupils to complete the work.

Summarizing the promotions made at the close of last year, we find that 60 per cent. of all the pupils were promoted to the nine-year course and 40 per cent. to the six-year course. Of these, 45 per cent. were transfer promotions.

In connection herewith I desire to show some results of the system where it has been in operation in Odebolt, Iowa, for over six years. At the end of the sixth year there, 54 per cent. of all the pupils in the grades were in the nine-year course and 46 per cent. in the six-year course. Not counting the special promotions made during the school year the total number of promotions made there the last four years were divided as follows:

Regular promotions in the six-year course.....	34.5%
Regular promotions in the nine-year course.....	29.3%
Transfer promotions.....	34.5%
Non-promotions.....	1.7%

During this entire time, 29 per cent. of the pupils did all their work in the six-year course; 22 per cent. did theirs in the nine-year course, while 49 per cent. worked in both courses.

Judging from the above, this means that, in a school graded to suit the different capabilities of children, 22 per cent., or about one-fourth of the pupils, will require nine years to complete the course, 29 per cent., or say one-fourth, can take the work in six years, and 49 per cent. will require either seven or eight years. While we have no figures at hand it is safe to say that, of this 49 per cent., fully half of them go through in seven years, leaving the other half, or about 25 per cent., to spend eight years. In round numbers, therefore, one-fourth of the pupils can do the work in six years, one-fourth in seven, a fourth in eight, and a fourth in nine years. We ask then whether it is not worth while to break away from the procrustean lock-step method of grading so common in the regular eight-year one-course system when three-fourths of the children attending school are not given the opportunity they are entitled to have.

And now the second standpoint of administration should be considered in the financial saving that the two-course system may be to any district.

From the above conditions the following is worked out. Of the 800 pupils in the LeMars graded schools, under an eight-year one course, practically all of them would spend eight years or longer. Under the two-course system one-fourth, or 200 of them, will require nine years, while a second fourth, or 200 others, will need but seven years, thereby offsetting those requiring nine years. One-fourth, or at least 200 pupils, will need but six years, thereby saving two years of attendance. Therefore every eight years there would be saved the tuition of 200 pupils for two years, which is equivalent to 400 pupils for one year. The tuition of 400 pupils saved in eight years is equal to  $\frac{1}{8}$  of 400 or 50 pupils every year. This means 50 pupils less to take care of every year. The cost of tuition per pupil has been \$18.00 per year, for 50 pupils it would be \$900.00 which is the amount saved to this district every year.

From the above it may be seen that any school having had

the two-course system of grading in operation a sufficient time, the enrolment of that school will be decreased  $6\frac{1}{4}$  per cent., thereby decreasing the expense materially.

Hence the two significant results of this system of grading are the benefits derived by pupils of different ability and the saving of expense in conducting the schools.